

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO USLO PEKING

SECSTATE WASHDC 5357

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 5659

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, CH

SUBJECT: INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO PEKING -- BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

REF: NEW DELHI 5571

1. NEWLY APPOINTED INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO PRC, KOCHERIL RAMAN NARAYANAN, IS A HIGHLY REGARDED FIFTY-SIX YEAR OLD CAREER DIPLOMAT WITH PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN CHINESE AFFAIRS, THOUGH HE HAS NEVER SERVED OR VISITED THERE BEFORE AND DOES NOT SPEAK OR READ CHINESE. FROM 1963 TO EARLY 1967, DURING THE DIFFICULT PERIOD AFTER THE BORDER WAR, HE SERVED AS DIRECTOR OF MEA'S EAST ASIA/CHINA DIVISION. PRIOR TO THAT ASSIGNMENT NARAYANAN SERVED IN CANBERRA (PART OF THE TIME AS ACTING HIGH COMMISSIONER) 1960-1962, AND HANOI (AS INDIAN CONSUL GENERAL) 1962-1963. NARAYANAN HAS MORE RECENTLY SERVED AS AMBASSADOR TO BANGKOK, FROM 1967 TO 1969, AND AMBASSADOR TO ISTANBUL, 1937 TO 1975. BETWEEN 1969 AND 1973 NARAYANAN HEADED THE MEA POLICY PLANNING DIVISION, WHERE HE FOUND TIME TO AUTHOR A PRIZE-WINNING BOOK ON "NEHRU AND THE POLICY OF NON-ALIGNMENT" AND WROTE A STRONG POLICY PAPER RECOMMENDING THAT INDIA MOVE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE PRC.

2. NARAYANAN COMES FROM A MODEST SOUTH INDIAN (KERALA) BACKGROUND, A HARIJAN BY ORIGIN ("UNTOUCHABLE"). HE RECEIVED HIS PRIMARY AND SECOND EDUCATION AT MISSIONARY SCHOOLS NEAR
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HIS HOME IN KERALA, ATTENDED TRAVANCORE UNIVERSITY AND THEN

WENT ON A FELLOWSHIP TO THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS. THERE HE TOOK A FIRST IN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY UNDER HAROLD LASKI. AFTER RETURNING TO INDIA AND SERVING BRIEFLY AS A CORRESPONDENT, HE JOINED THE FOREIGN SERVICE IN 1949, HAVING BEEN PROVIDED A PERSONAL RECOMMENDATION TO NEHRU BY HAROLD LASKI WHICH LED TO NEHRU'S TAKING A DIRECT INTEREST IN HIS CAREER. HE MET HIS WIFE USHA, A BURMESE, ON HIS FIRST OVERSEAS ASSIGNMENT TO RANGOON. THERE FOLLOWED ASSIGNMENTS TO TOKYO AND LONDON.

3. THE NARAYANANS HAVE TWO DAUGHTERS, ONE TWELVE AND ANOTHER WHO EDITS A MAGAZINE IN NEW DELHI. NEITHER DAUGHTER WILL ACCOMPANY THEM TO PEKING. EMBASSY OFFICERS OVER THE YEARS HAVE CONSISTENTLY REPORTED EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH NARAYANAN WHO HAS BEEN FOUND OPEN-MINDED: FRANK, AND FRIENDLY, AND NOT INCLINED TO ALLOW HIS LSE BACKGROUND GET IN THE WAY OF DISCUSSION. OUR OWN CONTACTS WITH HIM OVER THE LAST NINE MONTHS SINCE HE HAS BEEN BACK IN DELHI HAVE CONFIRMED THIS ASSESSMENT. HE HAS BEEN ACCESSIBLE AND COMPLETELY UNMARKED BY THE AIR OF CONDESCENSION WHICH OFTEN MARKS SENIOR INDIAN DIPLOMATS. WE ANTICIPATE THAT USLO WILL FIND BOTH NARAYANANS INTELLIGENT AND CONGENIAL COLLEAGUES WHO RESPOND TO OPENNESS AND FRANKNESS AND ARE READY AND WILLING TO ESTABLISH EXCELLENT RELATIONS WITH AMERICANS.

4. BOTH NARAYANANS ARE NON-VEGETARIANS AND LIGHT DRINKERS. THEY WILL PROBABLY LEAVE DELHI FOR PEKING AT THE END OF JUNE AND STOP OFF IN HONG KONG FOR ABOUT TEN DAYS. THE DELAY IN THEIR DEPARTURE RELATES TO CONCERN OVER SCHOOLING FOR THEIR DAUGHTER RATHER THAN TO ANY POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS. SAXBE

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